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ASTONISHING X-MEN

JOSS WHEDON • JOHN CASSADAY

YOU CAN LET GO NOW.

I FORGOT I WAS HOLDING YOU IN.

FORGOT...

IS IT VERY DIFFERENT WITHOUT THEM?

WELL, THERE'S THE BLUE.

I SEE BLUE, BUT IT'S TINGED... EVERYTHING'S TINGED WITH RED. BUT NOW...

WELL NOW I KNOW YOU REALLY ARE A REDHEAD--

--AND A NATURAL REDHEAD, TOO.

THAT AS WELL.

DID I MAKE YOU SAD?

NO, NO.

I DON'T MIND THE WAY I SEE THINGS, I JUST...

I ALWAYS HAVE TO THINK ABOUT IT. ABOUT KEEPING THE FORCE FROM BREAKING FREE, FROM DISINTEGRATING THESE GLASSES AND JUST BLASTING.

I WONDER, IF IT GOT OUT OF CONTROL...

...WOULD IT STILL ONLY COME FROM MY EYES?

IT WON'T GET THE BETTER OF YOU.

I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW, I UNDERSTAND ABOUT POWER THAT HAS TO BE CONTROLLED.

OH, SWEETIE ARE YOU REALLY COMPARING...

SCOTT, LOVE, YOU'RE JUST A MAN.

I'M PHOENIX.

YOU HAVE TO BE @#$%ING KIDDING.

OH, SCOTT, DON'T YOU WANT A LITTLE TASTE--

DON'T TOUCH ME.

I DON'T MIND, YOU KNOW.

I KNOW YOU THINK ABOUT HER.

HOW GOOD SHE COULD BE.

HOW BAD SHE COULD BE.

I DON'T LIKE GAMES, EMMA.

NO, YOU'RE SCOTT SUMMERS. YOU LIKE HOMEWORK AND VEGETABLES.

BUT YOU DO PLAY GAMES WITH *ME*.

WHEN JEAN WAS ALIVE, YOU LOVED OUR GAMES.

I NEVER TOUCHED YOU WHILE--

IS THAT HOW YOU MAKE IT WORK?

BECAUSE OUR TRYSTS WERE PSYCHIC, THEY DON'T COUNT? YOUR CONSCIENCE IS CLEAR?

NO, IT'S NOT.

WELL. TRUTH.

LET'S PLAY AT *THAT*, SHALL WE?

TRUTH. THIS DOESN'T WORK FOR YOU AT ALL? TO HAVE JEAN...A JEAN WHO'LL DO ABSOLUTELY ANYTHING YOU WANT?

YOU COULDN'T CONTROL HER. SHE WAS OUT OF YOUR LEAGUE, AM I WRONG? YOU HELD HER AND WISHED, WISHED YOU COULD BE EVERYTHING SHE...

...YOU WISHED YOU COULD BE...

YOU SICK BITCH.

OH STOP *HIDING*, SCOTT! YOU KNOW YOU THOUGHT OF BEING HIM...THE ONE EVERYONE REMEMBERS. THE POSTER CHILD FOR MUTANT COOL.

THE LOVE OF HER LIFE.

DDDNYAAAGH!

POOR PUPPY, DON'T YOU REMEMBER?

YOU DON'T HAVE ANY CLAWS.

AAAH!

OH MY GOD!

OH MY GOD!

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

OH MY GOD!

I PHASED!

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

ARE YOU?

IT WAS STRANGE.

I CAN'T BELIEVE I PHASED JUST THEN! THAT'S NEVER...IT WAS TOTALLY YOUR FAULT.

I LIKE TO THINK SO, YES.

TEE HEE.

IT'S A SIMPLE QUESTION, SCOTT.

JEAN WAS HIS FAVORITE. HE SENSED HER POTENTIAL, EVEN THEN. AND HE'S ALWAYS BEEN PARTIAL TO PSYCHICS.

HE'D NEVER ADMIT IT, BUT HE THINKS WE'RE A BIT...ABOVE.

HANK IS A GENIUS, AND TERRIBLY GOOD WITH PEOPLE.

WARREN LOOKED LIKE A GOD.

AND XAVIER PICKS YOU?

TO LEAD.

WHY?

BECAUSE YOU HAD NOTHING ELSE.

THIS ISN'T ABOUT US ANY MORE, EMMA. AND YOU HAVE NO IDEA--

YOU HEAR ONE THING IN THIS ROOM THAT ISN'T JUST A LITTLE BIT TRUE, YOU WALK RIGHT OUT.

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO ACHIEVE? TO PULL ME APART? IT'S BEEN DONE.

OFTEN, AND WITH EASE.

I'M TRYING TO *FIND* YOU.

AND I'VE SHARED YOUR BED LONG ENOUGH TO HAVE THAT RIGHT.

YOU'VE NEVER TRUSTED ME, BUNKMATES OR NO. AFTER WE FOLLOWED DANGER TO GENOSHA, IT GOT JUST A BIT WORSE.

BUT THE PROFESSOR... HE REALLY LET YOU DOWN

AND HE'S CLOSE TO THE CORE, ISN'T HE? THE ONE WHOSE JUDGMENT YOU COULD ALWAYS TRUST.

THE ONE WHO CHOSE YOU.

YOU'RE A VERY SPECIAL PERSON, SCOTT.

YOU DON'T KNOW IT YET, BUT YOU ARE.

YOU'VE SEEN LEADERS, SCOTT.

"THEY MAKE THEMSELVES KNOWN.

"THEY CAN'T HELP IT.

"THE ONE TIME YOU HAD TO DEFEND YOUR TITLE, YOU LOST IT. TO STORM.

"POTENTIALLY THE MOST POWERFUL TEAM ON EARTH AND XAVIER GAVE YOU THE TOP POSITION..."

...OUT OF PITY.

BECAUSE HE THOUGHT YOU'D WASH OUT IF YOU DIDN'T GET A LITTLE BOOST.

AND YOU DID WELL, DARLING!

YOU LED THE TEAM-- YOU EVEN GOT THE GIRL!

BUT YOU KNEW. HOW XAVIER FELT, HOW THE WORLD SAW YOU...

IT'S SO HARD TO HOLD ON TO SOMETHING YOU KNOW YOU DON'T DESERVE.

THE X-MEN NEVER COHERED, NEVER WON THE WORLD'S APPROBATION. AND JEAN, GOD, SHE WOULDN'T *STOP* DYING ON YOU.

YOU HAD NO CONTROL.

CONTROL.

FIRST TO LAST, THAT'S THE THING.

ARE YOU READY TO GO TO THE BUG ROOM?

"AND HOW SURE ARE WE ABOUT THIS?"

WELL, IT'S PRECOG STUFF, SO THERE'S ALWAYS--

HOW SURE?

ZERO DISSENT.

SYDREN, YOU CATCHING ANY OF THIS?

I DON'T READ THE FUTURE. BUT I'VE SNIFFED THE PRECOGS AND I SSSMELL CERTAINTY.

AND TERROR.

YEAH, IT'S GOING AROUND.

WHY NOW? WHY DO THEY ALL SEE IT NOW?

WE GOTTA FIGURE IT'S TEMPORAL.

THAT IT'S IMMINENT.

AND IF OUR GUYS PICKED IT UP, THE BREAKWORLD--

THEY CLOSED DOWN COMMUNICATION SIXTEEN HOURS AGO.

FOR DECADES, THEY GET A LITTLE PSYCHIC TICKLE THAT A MUTANT, AN X-MAN, IS GOING TO DESTROY THEIR WORLD.

THEY CAN'T NARROW IT DOWN SO THEY SEND THAT THUG, ORD, TO NEUTRALIZE THE MUTANTS IN TOTO.

HE'S FAILED. AND HE WAS THEIR VERSION OF SUBTLE. NOW THAT THEY HAVE A NAME, AND A DATE...

THIS IS GONNA BE BIG UGLY.

OKAY, SO WHO'S OUR LUCKY WINNER?

I WAS WONDERING WHEN YOU WERE GONNA ASK.

AGENT BRAND...

...MEET THE DESTROYER OF WORLDS.

YOUR LITTLE PRIVATE HELL... COURTESY OF CASSANDRA NOVA
MINE'S MUCH MORE UPSCALE-- YOU SHOULD COME FIND ME SOME-TIME
I'LL FAIL YOU...
I CAN'T CONTROL IT...
CONTROL WHAT, DEAR? YOUR POWER?
IT'S YOUR GREAT SETBACK, ISN'T IT? THE SOURCE OF ALL YOUR EXTRAORDINARY SELF-DOUBT
EVERY GREAT LEADER REVELS IN HIS POWER. HOWEVER JUDICIOUSLY HE USES IT. BUT YOURS...YOU FEAR IT. YOU RESENT IT.
EVER SINCE YOU AND YOUR PESKY BROTHER HAD THAT FALL--
OH. THERE YOU ARE NOW--
--YOU'VE BEEN UNABLE TO CONTROL IT. LIVING IN CONSTANT, RIGID TERROR OF HARMING SOMEONE WITH IT.
IT'S HARD TO LIVE WITH.
BUT NOT AS HARD AS THE REAL TRUTH.
LAST STOP.

JEAN NEVER SAW THIS. XAVIER, NOVA--THEY MISSED IT BECAUSE YOU MADE IT DISAPPEAR.

EVERYTHING YOU ARE, AND EVERYTHING YOU *AREN'T*, HINGES ON THIS MOMENT.

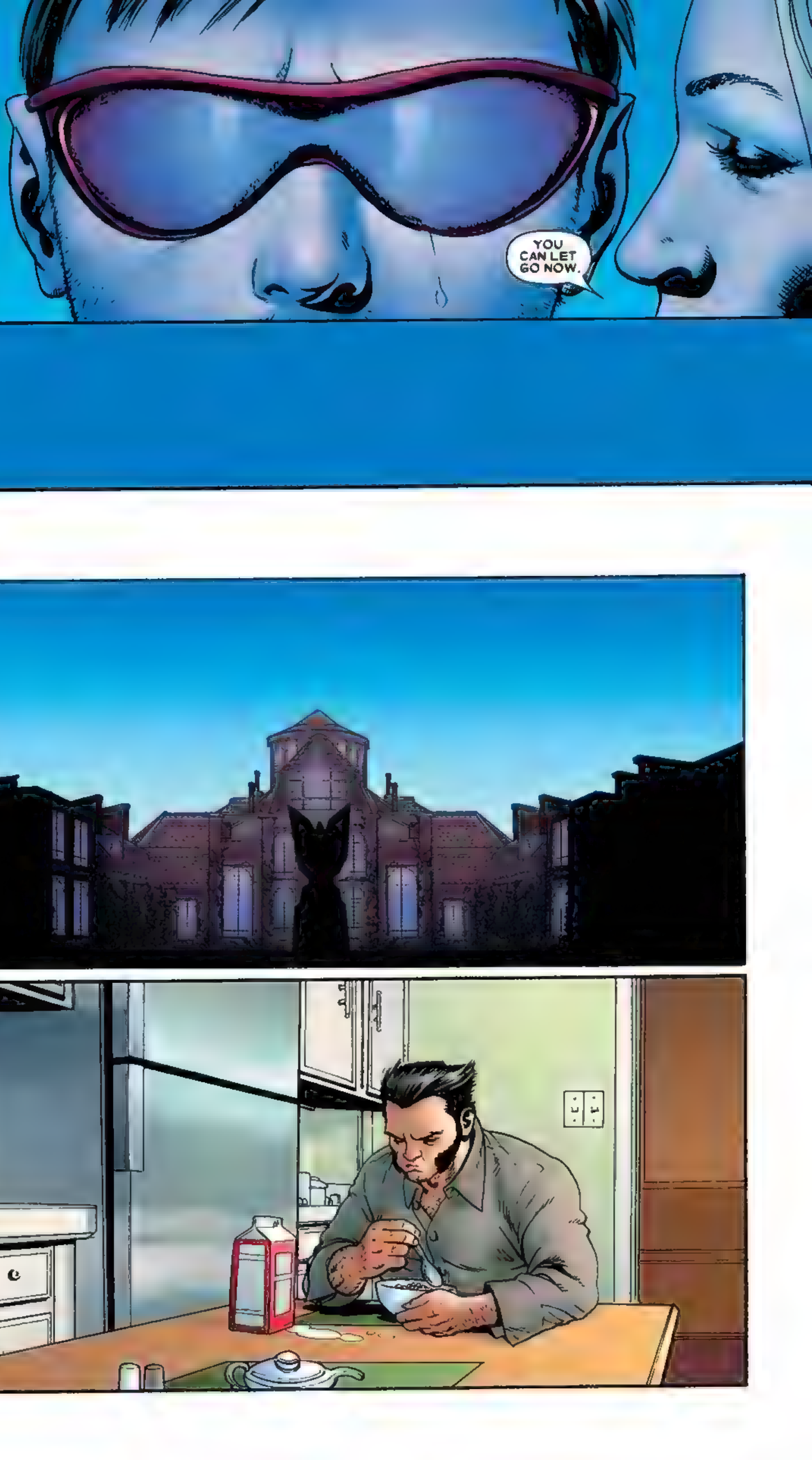
THE WORLD IS A TERRIFYING PLACE FOR SOME CHILDREN.

THAT LACK OF CONTROL, THAT FEAR OF ABANDON...IT WAS ALWAYS IN YOU. THE ONLY WAY TO BE SURE YOU WOULD ALWAYS, *ALWAYS* HOLD YOURSELF TOGETHER...

...WAS TO MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE NOT TO.

WHAT IS THAT BOY DOING, MY LOVE?

DECIDING.


YOU CAN LET GO NOW.

MORNING.

'BOUT TIME.

OKAY, SO, COFFEE?

DA. PLEASE. YES.

ARE WE THE FIRST UP?

HRRM.

EMMA, I'M GLAD YOU'RE UP. YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN THIS...

OH GOD NO.

"THERE'S SO MUCH YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD NEVER FACE."

"THE DECISION NOT TO TRY TO CONTROL YOUR POWER, TO LET IT BE YOUR DEMON.

"TOO SHAMEFUL TO REMEMBER, SO YOU LET IT EAT YOUR LIFE UP INSTEAD.

"BUT YOU'RE PAST IT NOW, SCOTT. AND ALL YOU HAD TO DEFEAT, ALL YOU HAD TO LET GO OF...

"...WAS YOU.

"YOU'RE FREE, MY LOVE.

"YOU'RE FREE."

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EMPIRE